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# AMERICA AND WORLD PEACE

BY WILLIS FLETCHER JOHNSON

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LORD BRYCE has recently reminded us of the greatest problem in the world, and of America's relation to it.

That problem is, *How humanity is to protect itself against a recurrence of this war, or the occurrence of another like it.* That is the problem which directly concerns every nation in the world, over and above every other issue of the war; and upon the successful solution of which the welfare of humanity depends to a paramount degree. In seeking a solution of it we are not adopting a "peace at any price" pacifism, nor hinting at immediate and universal disarmament. We realize that man is naturally a fighting animal. As "the child is father of the man," so the man is father of the state. A nation composed of men individually inclined toward fighting will be a fighting nation. We do not look for a transformation of human nature. Men have quarreled and fought in all ages of the world, and so in all ages there have been wars. But while we may not prevent two men from fighting each other occasionally, we do expect to keep all members of the community from joining in a general mêlée; and we hold the two men who do fight amenable to the law for their acts. So we may not avoid the occurrence, now and then, of a war between two states, for the settlement of some controversy which diplomacy, mediation, adjudication and arbitration have all been unable to compose; but we may expect to hold such belligerents amenable to the laws of nations in their conduct of the strife. That is a very different thing from having all nations, or a great number of them, plunge into a general embroilment, in which treaties and international law are swept aside and civilization is resolved into chaos. Against such a catastrophe as this, it ought to be, it must be, possible for the world to find some measure of secure protection, just as the

state or the community protects itself against universal riot. To do that is one of the primary and paramount duties of a municipality or a state. It is one of its very reasons for existence. To fail to do it is to abrogate its title to sovereignty. To do the same is no less the paramount duty of the world.

The consummate crisis which the closing of this war portends calls for the best counsels of all the nations, and chiefly the greatest of neutrals. It is too mighty a question for the belligerents alone to deal with. Upon that the neutrals should insist, if there were need of it. But there will not be need. The belligerents themselves, or the chief of them, will insist upon it. Let us realize that any premature meddling in behalf of peace, however well-meant, would be rejected and resented; as it should be. The nations which are fighting are bent upon fighting the quarrel out, to their own satisfaction.

But when the time comes for making peace, and especially for the one supreme settlement, they will not only admit, they will not only welcome, but they will earnestly request, they will imperatively demand, the co-operation of the neutral Powers. Lord Bryce makes that unmistakably clear. There is no voice more authoritative, and there is none to which Americans would more gladly listen, than that of the author of *The American Commonwealth*. Let us recall his words:

If there is to be a recurrence of wars, becoming more terrible with the unceasing advance of science, we may well despair of the future. . . . To establish any machinery for preserving peace would be impossible without the co-operation of the neutral states, and especially the greatest of all the neutral states. We have been waiting and watching to see whether America would, in view of the immense interests at stake, abandon her old policy of complete isolation and bear her part in the efforts for procuring a permanent alliance for peace.

The purport of that is unmistakable. It is expressed with all of Lord Bryce's clarity of thought and directness of speech. Substantially, its meaning is this: "Great wars must be stopped or the world is lost. They can be stopped only with the aid of America. Now, what is America going to do about it?"

America, in this view of the case, is the "last hope of the world." We should hesitate to estimate how often it has

been called that, in a political sense. For more than a century men have been so regarding it, as an example in popular government, and as an asylum for the oppressed of all lands. Now it is to be called upon to play that role in an irenic sense. Having been—more or less—the “last hope” of freedom, it is hailed as the last hope of peace. Why? Note Lord Bryce’s characterization: “The greatest of all neutral states.” But there is another neutral state, three times as great—in population—as we. Why is China ignored? Why is not that immense neutral and most pacific state looked to as the “last hope”? Why is China a negligible cipher in the solution of the greatest problem in the world? For reasons which it will be uncommonly profitable for America to consider at this time.

China is negligible in the world’s greatest crisis because she has been given to watchful waiting and nothing more; because, while wishing to hold other nations to strict accountability for their dealings with her, she has ever been unprepared for defense, if not indeed too proud to fight; because the spirit of Josephus Daniels has prevailed in her navy and in her army: in a word, because of pacifism. That fact not merely suggests but unerringly indicates the indispensable qualifications which alone can make this country measure up to the standard which Lord Bryce has set for us, as the irenic savior of the world. We must get rid of the shallow sophistry that American ideals thrive only in pacifism. We need to show that a democracy which was founded by strong men, not one of whom was too proud to fight, can be maintained on its original basis by strong men, who can make their words mean what they say. On a pacifist basis, America would be as negligible as China. On a basis of rational preparedness, of “America first and America efficient,” we should be a force making for peace and righteousness which no Power nor combination of Powers would venture to defy.

It would be a noble thing to respond to the call of the nations which Lord Bryce has voiced, and to establish in the world a *Pax Americana* by giving our co-operation in the establishment of a league for peace. But to do so we must measure up to the standard, and we must be represented by a chief of state who measures up to the standard and who is so recognized by the world. We could not hope to do so with Mr. Wilson as our President. It may be, as the

Editor of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* justly observed last month, no disparagement of him to say that he has no friends abroad. We do not choose our Presidents to please other nations. Mr. Cleveland was probably not liked in Great Britain when he ordered hands off in Venezuela; but his mandate was respected, and he kept us out of war. Mr. Roosevelt probably had no friends in the Wilhelmstrasse when he told the Kaiser that a German fleet arriving in the Caribbean would find our "far-flung battle line" awaiting it; but his warning was respected, and he kept us out of war. It is perhaps a negligible thing that an American President is not liked abroad. It is decidedly not a negligible thing that he is not feared nor trusted nor respected. To be thus regarded rules him hopelessly out of the serious councils of the nations; and the nation bearing him as an incubus could not hope to be a potent factor in solving the world's greatest problem.

The prime essential, then, for this country, if it is to play its part in the transcendent world-issues of the next few years, is worthy leadership. It is not enough that the mind and heart and will of the people be right; as they are and always are. The people do not sit, in mass, in international conferences nor write notes to the other Powers. They must have a spokesman, who will represent them and interpret their will, both personally and through suitable ambassadors. He must be a man of candor, of courage, and of consistency, who can both conceive and execute a definite policy, in the interest not of himself nor of his party but of the whole nation. He must be a man who commands the trust and the respect of his own country and also of the other nations of the world; who does not mistake petulance for power or hesitance for prudence; who both intellectually and morally will have among the rulers and statesmen of the world some recognizable measure of that preëminence which we claim for America among the nations.

In these circumstances it is most auspicious that America is able to present to the world a man who, judged by every known and available rule, gives ample promise of measuring up to the necessary standard. Nobody in his senses, either at home or abroad, ever questioned the candor, the courage, or the consistency, of Charles Evans Hughes. Nobody ever doubted that he knew exactly what he meant, or that he meant exactly what he said. Nobody ever had cause to doubt

that he would fulfil his word, to the final letter. In the councils of the nations his personality would stand at par. Having worn the ermine for years unspotted, and having at the call of the people laid it down unspotted in order that he might perform the other duties which they required of him, he would retain in administration and in diplomacy the integrity and the judgment of the highest seat of justice. With such a man America might well respond to the call of the world for help, and might successfully assume the moral hegemony of the human race in this great crisis.

Lord Bryce says that Britons "have been waiting and watching to see whether America would, in view of the immense interests at stake, abandon her old policy of complete isolation and bear her part in the efforts for procuring a permanent alliance for peace." Now I shall not hesitate to say that if the question were what Lord Bryce conceives it to be, it should be answered in the affirmative. The interests at stake, "for all we have and are," are so immense: the issues, for ourselves as well as for all the rest of the world, are so tremendous: that if our policy had been one of "complete isolation," as Lord Bryce implies, we should abandon it without a moment's demur, with emotions resembling those of John Adams when he signed the peace treaty of 1783 in defiance of the instructions of Congress: "It is glory," he exclaimed, "to have broken such infamous orders!"

But the implication in Lord Bryce's question is erroneous. In responding to the call of the nations we shall not be abandoning our "old policy of complete isolation," for the reason that we never have had any such policy. There are always those who are "more royal than the King." There are those who, catching upon a part of Washington's meaning in his Farewell Address, would enforce a partial conception of his policy to an extent which he never contemplated and which he doubtless would now be the last to approve. It would be preposterous, and it would be offensive and derogatory to his fame, to insist that he meant that the prudent rules which he prescribed for three or four million weak, struggling colonists on the Atlantic littoral should be perpetually binding and unchangeable as the laws of the Medes and Persians, hard and fast forever, upon one of the largest, richest and most powerful nations in the world, with a domain continental in extent and with possessions and inter-

ests encircling the earth. He meant no such folly, any more than he meant that the United States should forever be confined to the original Thirteen. He made it clear that his policy of partial—by no means complete—isolation was intended for the country *in the circumstances and conditions of that time*, leaving the future in the lap of the gods.

The founders of this Republic had no thought of making it a "hermit nation," after the fashion of Korea or Tibet. They had vision. They anticipated its growth, and the growth of international relationships which we could not avoid if we would, and would not if we could. They meant this to be a world Power, concerned in the common welfare of mankind. "Free and independent states," wrote Jefferson in the Declaration, which "have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do": in that there was no hint that we were to be forever a dwarf nation, a cripple nation, a perpetual minor among the peoples of the earth. There was no self-imposition of fetters. We were a nation, fully fledged, the peer of any other nation in all the attributes of sovereignty; and we were to adapt to ourselves collectively the profession of Terentius: *Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto*.

Participation in the world's affairs, and not "complete isolation," has been our consistent policy, from the beginning—in war and peace. We began our national existence in alliance with a European Power. We have fought wars with European and with African Powers. We have participated with European Powers in the settlement of international controversies to which we were not ourselves a party. We "opened" Japan and Korea. We took part in the international tribunals of Egypt. We were a party to the Algeiras Conference and the resultant treaty. We have entered into a multitude of international acts and conventions which were and are tantamount to alliances, for a multitude of purposes—for amelioration of the condition of the wounded in war, for the protection of telegraphic cables, for the control of wireless telegraphy, for the suppression of the slave trade, for prevention of the importation of spirituous liquors into Africa, for international sanitation, and what not else.

The suggestion, which has been made by some, that our participation in international affairs would compel the

abandonment of the Monroe Doctrine, and would involve us in all the evils which that instrument was designed to avert, is to be mentioned only to be dismissed as doubly groundless. It seems to have arisen from a notion that the Monroe Doctrine is a part of international law, which would be automatically repealed by our entry into an alliance of any kind with a European Power. It is, of course, nothing of the sort. It is simply a statement of our own national policy. It was made in entire independence of all other Powers, and has never relied for validity upon their assent. It would no more be abrogated by our making an alliance than, for example, would England's national policy of free trade. If it had been thus subject to alien influences it would have been abolished long ago, for this country has repeatedly made what were practically treaties of alliance with numerous European Powers.

This point was raised in connection with the first Hague Convention, and also with the Algeciras Convention, and while it was pretty authoritatively regarded as of no consequence, it was deemed fitting to make a declaration to that effect. Thus in signing the Hague Convention the American Plenipotentiaries made, in writing, a reservation declaring that nothing in the instrument should be so construed as to require the United States to depart from its traditional policy of not intruding upon, interfering with, or entangling itself in the political questions of policy or internal administration of any foreign state, or so as to imply a relinquishment by the United States of its traditional attitude toward purely American questions. And when the Algeciras Convention was ratified by our Senate, a resolution was adopted declaring that there was no purpose to depart from the traditional foreign policy which forbids participation by the United States in the settlement of political questions which are purely European in their scope.

Now these declarations were in a sense superfluous, since they merely repeated what had long been a matter of course. Yet they served the useful purpose of a reminder, and for that purpose a similar declaration might well be appended to the text of such a convention as that which Lord Bryce has in view. This could the more fittingly be done for two salient reasons. One is, that the question of maintaining peace, or of preventing another world-wide war, is not a "political question of policy or internal administration of



any foreign state," nor a "political question purely European in scope." It is a matter of world-wide interest and scope, and therefore pertains to America as much as to Europe, entirely regardless of the Monroe Doctrine. The other is, that there is not the slightest incompatibility between the Monroe Doctrine and an irenic alliance, but on the contrary there is the closest possible harmony. The Monroe Doctrine is not belligerent, but distinctly irenic. It was the first great international peace decree, at least in our history, and as such it was effective. In nearly a century of existence and force it has not caused a single breach of the peace, and it has directly prevented several wars.

We may therefore respond to the call of the nations for aid in the making and keeping of peace, not in spite of, but rather because of, the Monroe Doctrine. There is no "old policy of complete isolation" in the way. The consistent records of the past and the logic of our traditional declarations of policy, as well as the imperative exigencies of the present and the world's hope for the future, all sanction our favorable reply. We are already committed to it. We should be false to our faith, recreant to the spirit of the Founders, if we should shirk the duty. Hitherto we have often—perhaps too often—vaunted ourselves upon our service to humanity in offering here an asylum for the victims of political oppression, if they could and would flee hither. It would be a noble complement now to render the service of carrying influences of peace to the other nations of the world. We have heard of peace imposed upon the world for a time by the might of some overbearing autocracy. The *Pax Americana* would be a peace sanctioned by the judgment and welcomed by the desire of most if not all of the nations of the world, to which this nation would sustain the relation not of an arrogant dictator, but of a sympathetic co-operator in the execution of the general will. To achieve such an end may well be an inspiration to American citizens in these last days of a national campaign which is to determine not only our domestic policies, but also the status of this country among the Powers of the earth.

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